

Facebook admits it pretended it did not know that apps harvested data of 87 million innocent users



- "We did not read all of the terms and conditions," CTO Mike Schroepfer told U.K. lawmakers at a parliamentary committee hearing.
- Schroepfer said that Facebook did not notify the U.K.'s data protection watchdog after it learned of the sharing of data with Cambridge Analytica.
- He said it was a "mistake" that Facebook hadn't notified users of the data leak earlier than it did.

Ryan Browne | [@Ryan_Browne_](#)

Mark Zuckerberg testifies before the House Energy and Commerce Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill April 11, 2018.

Facebook advertisers remain 'engaged' on platform despite data breach, says analyst

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Facebook did not read the terms and services of the app that improperly shared user data with Cambridge Analytica, the company's chief technology officer said Thursday.

"We require that people have a terms and conditions and we have an automated check there at the time — this was in 2014, maybe earlier," Mike Schroepfer told U.K. lawmakers at a parliamentary committee hearing. "We did not read all of the terms and conditions."

Aleksandr Kogan, a Cambridge University researcher, created an app that collected data on millions of Facebook users. Kogan's company, Global Science Research, then shared that data with political analytics firm Cambridge Analytica.

Kogan said on Tuesday that Facebook did not pull it up on its terms of services until after The Guardian newspaper reported [early information](#) about it harvesting user data.

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg told U.S. lawmakers earlier this month that Kogan was "in violation" of his agreement with the platform and that this was a "big issue." But the data scientist hit back at the company's boss, arguing that tens of thousands of other developers were employing similar practices to his app.

The academic said Facebook's criticisms of him were likely the result of the social media giant undergoing "[PR crisis mode](#)."

Facebook didn't notify UK regulator

Schroepfer said Thursday that Facebook did not notify the U.K.'s data protection watchdog, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), after it learned of the sharing of data with Cambridge Analytica.

 [Facebook CTO Mike Schroepfer](#)

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Facebook CTO Mike Schroepfer

Asked whether the social network called the ICO in the wake of the discovery, Schroepfer said: "I don't think we did." Pressed as to why, he added: "At the time, we thought the matter was resolved. We had received legal certification from all the parties involved that the data was not there again."

The ICO has been running an inquiry into data misuse and political advertising in the wake of accusations that social media platforms were used to influence elections. It is investigating 30 organizations, including social media firms, data analytics firms and political parties.

Schroepfer said it was a "mistake" that Facebook hadn't notified users of the data leak earlier than it did, echoing CEO Zuckerberg's comments on the matter earlier this month. Facebook has been [notifying its users](#) about whether their data was shared with Cambridge Analytica since April 9.

Political ad labeling in UK

[Facebook](#) will label political adverts and provide an archive of such ads prior to 2019 that shows who has financed them to provide more transparency, Schroepfer said. This is similar to a feature the social network plans to roll out in the U.S. this year. This follows concerns that Facebook data was used to sway the Brexit vote in 2016.

Schroepfer said, addressing Facebook's data and advertising practices, that: "It's my understanding that what we do now is completely legal."

The company has been haunted by criticisms of how it handles users' data in the wake of a scandal that saw millions of people's data shared without their permission to Cambridge Analytica.

Cambridge Analytica, which Facebook says may have obtained 87 million users' records, briefly worked for the Donald Trump presidential campaign in 2016. Its former Chief Executive, Alexander Nix, was caught on camera saying the company had — but the firm has said Nix's comments were misconstrued.